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1970/01/16

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Reporting on Vietnamization

I thought I should send you this memorandum in order to let you know of my hesitations about the optimistic reporting which we are receiving on Vietnamization. This is simply a word of caution; I will be providing you later with a more lengthy memorandum after we have proceeded further in the studies we are making of this question.

My doubts about these optimistic reports are based on three observations:

(1) The North Vietnamese cannot have fought for 25 years only to call it quits without another major effort. This effort could come in many ways -- through attacks on American forces, ARVN forces or local forces. But if they had decided not to make the effort, they would presumably have been more forthcoming with regard to negotiations.

(2) We have not seen proof that ARVN has really improved. It may be that the enemy forces have been hurt rather than that ARVN is significantly better than it was in the past. It could be that when the enemy drew back its main forces and cut down its activity in August and September, perhaps because of our threat in Paris at the beginning of August, they under-estimated the effect this would have on their guerrilla forces.

(3) There could be too much pressure from the top for optimistic reporting. This would suggest that you should move soon to name a new Chairman of the JCS. Uncertainty about Wheeler's successor leads to maneuvering by the potential candidates.

HAK:TL:lds:1/16/70

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Authority E012958
By WBD NARA Date 3/2/00